



# Participatory monitoring

## A practitioner's handbook

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## Participatory monitoring: A practitioner's handbook

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# 1 Foreword

This handbook has been produced by the Basel Institute on Governance in support of the USAID- funded project „Engaged Citizenry for Responsible Governance”. It is meant to be used in conjunction with the handbook on social accountability methods, developed by the Basel Institute in support of the same project.

The material here contained provides implementers and interested parties with a practical guide to the elements and steps necessary in order to develop a citizen monitoring program. The handbook has been tailored based on the experiences of trusted colleagues who are seasoned implementers in the area of citizen monitoring initiatives as well as drawing from resources on the topic that have been made publicly available by some of the world’s most reputed development agencies.

In addition, for purposes of illustrating the operationalization of some key concepts throughout the handbook, reference is made to the participatory monitoring experiences of G-Watch in Philippines, specifically regarding the implementation of an agricultural subsidies monitoring program –BULHON sa Panguma (BULHON)- in San Miguel, Bohol. For detailed information on this program see G-Watch 2012b.

## 2 Introduction to participatory monitoring

### 2.1 What is citizen participation?

Citizen participation is a community-based process, where citizens organize themselves at the grassroots level and work together through non-governmental community organizations with the aim to influence decision-making processes. Citizens get most involved in such processes when the issue at stake relates directly to them. Furthermore, citizen participation is most fruitful when all concerned stakeholders cooperate to implement changes.

Public participation is a key factor in the exercise of democratic accountability and increases transparency in the decision-making process. If citizens are involved in policy development, this enables them to better hold government officials to account for their decisions and actions. At the same time, it motivates and empowers citizens to monitor the implementation of policies. Consequently, citizens should be ideally involved with public sector actors in the definition and implementation of policies, as their inputs can make a significant contribution to strengthen the quality and responsiveness of those essential public services that play a critical role in citizens’ everyday lives, such as community housing, primary healthcare or education.

## 2.2 Constructive engagement

The concept of constructive engagement underpins the practice of participatory monitoring. It refers to the process of building a mature relationship between government and civil society represented by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Constructive engagement is both a precondition for and a key trait of participatory processes and has several characteristics:

- It involves trust-building between citizen groups and government (builds incentives).
- It is evidenced-based (uses data and information).
- It is results- or solution-oriented (has concrete outcomes benefitting the people, especially the poor).
- It is a sustained and sustainable kind of engagement (works towards developing mature partnerships).

## 2.3 Participatory performance monitoring

Participatory performance monitoring is a particular kind of participatory engagement that refers to the involvement of citizens, users of services, or CSOs in observing and evaluating public service delivery. It is a process that allows the public to follow the implementation of government decisions and policies at the local level, measure their efficiency and adequacy, provide feedback and, ultimately, demand accountability from public office holders.

Participatory Performance Monitoring can make an important contribution towards improving the quality of service delivery and reducing corruption and leakages in the system.

In most cases participatory monitoring requires the presence of an implementing agency or several agencies, either contracted out by local government or articulated by their own (community) initiative. Therefore, this methodology fosters good communication not only between the government and civil society, but also between CSOs and local citizens.

Performance Monitoring is an accountability process that entails four steps:

1. Observing service implementation with the project's main objective in mind;
2. Comparing the plan and standards with the actual accomplishments;
3. Checking particular aspects of the project in its various stages; and
4. Recommending remedial actions, if necessary.

As the state's monitoring capabilities in decentralized settings are often limited, performance monitoring undertaken by citizens or users of services themselves is an effective and efficient approach. Citizen engagement can turn monitoring into a proactive process through which compliance with performance standards is ensured.

Even though social accountability initiatives may be initiated by state authorities, it is more often the case that participatory activities are organized by CSOs. This is also in line with the intent and goals of social accountability to further empower citizens.

#### 2.4 Obstacles/risks to citizen participation

A number of obstacles to citizen participation can be identified and they should be taken into account when planning an initiative. The most significant challenges often encountered are:

- **Obstruction on the part of local government authorities:** This is the most serious obstacle. Since social or participatory monitoring is, in most cases, aimed at improving the government's policies and services, its success depends largely on the readiness of the government to accept change and take on public advice. In order to gain the local government's support, it is important to either demonstrate the benefits of monitoring to the government or to create a lobby that is powerful enough to overcome the government's resistance.
- **Absence of a strong and active civil society sector in the community:** When the government is ready for social monitoring but there is no active NGO community to mediate the process, implementing social monitoring may be difficult since the community can potentially respond negatively to a monitoring process initiated directly by the government.

Further challenges include:

- Lack of trust
- Lack of cooperation between the stakeholders
- Limited access to information
- Little knowledge about rights and responsibilities
- Fear of the unknown
- Lack of self-confidence
- Limited or non-existent participatory structures
- Lack of skills, culture of participation and experience in this field
- Lack of resources (e.g. experience, time, funds)
- Lack of media attention to local issues
- Unrealistic expectations
- Lack of awareness of the need for professional facilitation
- Risk of backfire
- Focus is on a minute issue rather than broad issues

The identified challenges can be addressed and overcome through several mechanisms:

- Civic education and training
- Public awareness campaigns

- Communication strategies
- Networking and building bridges
- Sharing experiences
- Partnerships and twinning
- Fundraising
- Managerial skills
- Introducing volunteerism

## **2.5 Enabling factors for success**

Participatory monitoring is a process that is flexible in form and methodology, depending on factors such as monitoring goals, initiating party (e.g. CSOs, government, businesses, individual citizens), type of government decision or policy to be monitored, etc. The successful implementation of a social monitoring initiative is contingent on a number of prerequisites, namely:

- **Civil society capacity:** CSOs should be aware of the applications of social monitoring and how to use them effectively. They should also have the ability to interact successfully and efficiently with the local government and the private sector, since these two are most likely to be involved in the monitoring process, either as contractors or stakeholders.
- **Supportive or at least non-obstructive local government:** In some countries the civil society sector is rather young and not as independent as desirable. In others, the legislative environment does not contribute to strengthening CSOs or sometimes even purposefully weakens the space for CSOs. Therefore, CSOs have to take the social importance of the problem and the possible reaction of the government into account in all their initiatives. Good contact and constructive engagement with the local government and consideration of the government's interests contribute to the overall success.
- **A professional implementing agency with sufficient institutional capacity and positive image to implement the monitoring in a professional and transparent manner and to effectively communicate its results to all the stakeholders:** This is one of the key ingredients of the overall success, since even the best work can be discarded if it is performed by a politically affiliated or biased organization. Thus the relative independence of the implementing agency is very important.
- **The "right place and time":** Although somewhat vague, this is a critical factor since all of the previous major conditions do not substitute for the careful evaluation of the prevailing political and social circumstances in each case in order to determine whether favorable conditions exist in order to maximize the success of a participatory monitoring initiative.

## 2.6 Monitoring goals

Typically, the overall goal of any social monitoring initiative is to improve of living standards in the community by strengthening responsiveness and equitable access in the delivery of public services. Participatory monitoring also contributes to the overarching goal of fostering bottom-up democratic governance processes, resulting in:

- Less corruption
- A better relationship between local government and communities
- A better relationship between service providers and communities

Example: Objectives of the project BULHON in the Philippines:

The primary goal of BULHON is to ensure that the right type, quality and quantity of rice production programs and related services are provided to beneficiaries following established standard processes that ensure effective and efficient service delivery.

Specifically, it seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Pilot-test an easy-to-use monitoring tool for San Miguel Municipality's Rice Production Program and selected related services through joint citizen-Local Government Unit (LGU) engagement;
- Capacitate community-based monitors in using the monitoring tool through a series of activities including a briefing orientation, actual observation and coaching;
- Jointly process monitoring results and identify issues and problems in an effort to better improve the delivery of San Miguel's agriculture services;
- Agree on proposed solutions and actions in addressing identified issues and problems; and
- Use the monitoring results and recommendations to inform the stakeholders and key LGU decision makers of programs and project plans for the future.

Source: G-Watch 2012b

## 3 Preparatory activities

As a first step, the sector or program in which the social accountability initiative is most relevant, as a function of the needs and priorities of the communities, needs to be identified. This is especially important when the plan is to engage citizen monitors, as the activity needs to target a sector or issue that has a significant impact on citizens' everyday lives.

Otherwise, the sustainability of the initiative and commitment of the monitors may be compromised. Therefore, the monitoring program should target a sector, program or process, which citizens consider to be of high importance for their personal and their families' well-being. At this stage, application of the Basel Institute Methodology for contextualizing social accountability initiatives can provide implementers with pertinent information to inform program or process selection (Basel Institute on Governance 2016).

Implementers should be aware that there are trade-offs involved in the selection of a sector: Targeting those areas that matter most in the daily lives of citizens according to their own perceptions may mean leaving aside other areas, which may matter more for control of corruption. Thus, another criteria to assess the possible sectors and programs for engagement would be to identify the largest line items or programs in the local government budget. A compromise may need to be reached, but in any case implementers need to keep in mind that the success of a monitoring activity will, in all likelihood, be closely associated to the extent to which citizens are motivated to invest time and energies in improving performance in the focus area.

The following steps may assist in the process of making a decision about the particular sector or program that is most appropriate for a participatory monitoring initiative:

- Take stock of the programs or areas most affected by identified corruption risks in the region or community of interest.
- Research the standards relevant to the budgeting process, allocations, responsibility chains and performance associated with a selection of public services deemed to be of critical importance to the region or community. The selected program or service must have set standards that are relatively straightforward to monitor (in terms of quantities, quality, time, processes).
- Get an idea of the state of the relationship between local government or service providers and the community members. How much do they trust each other and are

For example, in San Miguel it was deemed that agriculture services affect the majority of the residents since most families rely on farming as primary source of income.

The Rice Production Program is one of the basic services offered by the San Miguel Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO). In its research, G-Watch found that the rice production program is critical as it is one of the most highly budgeted items and it affects the majority of the residents of the municipality.

Source: G-Watch 2012b

they receptive to collaborative actions? Political will and responsiveness to citizen engagement may vary significantly from sector to sector.

### 3.1 Is participatory monitoring the right approach for the context?

Before embarking on the development of a citizen monitoring initiative the implementers are encouraged to apply the research methodology developed by the Basel Institute on Governance to contextualize social accountability interventions (Basel Institute on Governance 2016). This is important in order to assess whether citizen monitoring is the right tool in view of the characteristics of the target communities and the local context.

### 3.2 Standards mapping

Standards are set rules or principles that are used as basis for deciding on the inputs, processes and expected outcomes of a public service. They are actions and procedures that service providers must comply with to ensure quality service. There are five indicators for standards: time, cost, quantity, quality and process.

1. Time standards are answerable by the amount of time it takes to finish or to deliver the service.
2. Cost standards are answerable by the amount paid to the supplier or amount used for the delivery of the service.
3. Quantity standards are answerable by the amounts or measurements used in the service delivery.
4. Quality standards are answerable by stating color, texture, taste and other physical appearances of the service delivery.
5. Process standards are answerable by yes or no depending on the compliance to specific processes.

Standards mapping is critical as the gathered standards are used for designing the monitoring tool. The relevant question that needs to be answered in order to develop a meaningful monitoring protocol is: which are the standards that – if complied with – will lead to effective service delivery and significantly reduce the opportunity space for corruption?

### 3.3 Identifying the monitoring site

Set criteria to decide where the monitoring will have the greatest effect. This may include characteristics such as the demographic composition, population numbers, urban/rural setting, socio-economic level of the area/neighborhood, incidence of bribe reporting, etc.

The decision may also have to take into account whether the aim of the monitoring is to cover all areas (in a given municipality), selected areas providing a representative sample, or some predefined critical areas. The key challenge at this stage is to identify where monitoring would matter most.

Once the monitoring site has been identified, inform the relevant stakeholders about the project. This may include community authorities, facility managers, neighborhood organizations, etc. It is a good practice as a sign of respect and courtesy before launching the project. Additionally, these stakeholders may be key resources when it comes to identifying potential citizen monitors.

In San Miguel monitoring sites were selected on the basis of a) population, b) productivity, c) type of area (irrigated or non-irrigated) and d) coverage of the rice production program.

Source: G-Watch 2012b

### 3.4 Involving stakeholders

This stage involves identifying possible partners for the project and all relevant stakeholders that need to be engaged. The level of engagement may vary depending on the nature of each stakeholder and the pre-existing relationship with each of them.

It is useful to start with a mapping of stakeholders, based on a basic knowledge about the selected program(s) that will be monitored. Stakeholders to include in this mapping exercise include the public officials responsible for program performance, service providers, other state and non-state actors whose inputs or actions affect performance of the selected program, as well as users and other individuals and groups that, even if indirectly, are affected by the service.

Once the local stakeholders have been identified, initiate contacts with them and assess the level of support and receptiveness to the idea of implementing a project involving citizen monitoring activities. Decide with which local counterparts the project should engage actively and who will be the participants in the monitoring activity. Again, information gathered based on the research methodology outlined in the Basel Institute's Social Accountability Practitioner's Handbook (Basel Institute on Governance 2016) may be usefully applied during the process of selecting project partners as it will suggest who are the actors and institutions that citizens trust most. As many experienced implementers have recognized, it is of critical importance that all groups involved in the process perceive the implementing partners as being impartial and above party politics. Therefore, identifying who are the actors and stakeholders that enjoy the highest levels of trust in the community is an important element to be taken into account.

Potential stakeholders include:

- Local chief executive

- The mayor of the locality in question is one of the key stakeholders to take into consideration and to ideally bring on board. In his/her position as public official, the mayor can be assumed to be interested in ensuring that his/her constituents see that the local government is delivering effective and efficient services.
- Other local government officials
  - According to sector in which the monitoring program is to be implemented identify the direct responsible officers for the area.
- CSOs
  - Identify CSOs engaged in the targeted sector/program: parents' associations, patients' associations and advocacy groups, farmers' organizations, etc.)
  - Other CSOs: Women's groups, Church based organizations, youth based associations, etc.

Local authorities (formal and informal) should at the minimum be informed about the intention of the project, characteristics and expected outputs and outcomes.

## 4 Engagement and capacity building of project participants

For this step, two main groups can be distinguished: the core group and the citizen monitors.

### 4.1 The core group

It has proven useful to set up a core group as coordinating and oversight body for each monitoring project. The core group is in charge of developing the monitoring plan, mobilizing and organizing the monitors at the community level, and overseeing the implementation of the monitoring plan. Core group members also serve as supervisors or coaches to the monitoring teams. They are also responsible for evaluating program implementation and, if deemed necessary, to update or revise the monitoring design to assure ease of use on the part of monitors as well as to adjust to any changes or inaccuracies in the elements of the program being monitored.

To form the core group, consider the different groups that should be represented and the feasibility of each before making decisions on the number of representatives from each group. In any case, community members should be granted a majority of places in the core group in order to maximize their empowerment, as this is consistent with the goal of

exercising social accountability. It also emphasizes the role of citizens in working with public authorities to ensure transparency and accountability in public services.

When engaging CSO members, it is important that the person be acceptable to the local government authorities, that the CSO has good networks in the community and is inclusive to all groups. When engaging members of local government, the optimal is to involve officers responsible for the implementation of the program or service to be monitored.

Commitment is a key attribute of core group members. The members must have the willingness and the availability to be engaged and follow up on the different stages of the monitoring process as well as following up activities.

#### 4.1.1 Responsibilities of the core group

The primary responsibilities of the core group are:

1. Plan and implement pre-monitoring activities
  - Completing and finalizing the list of partner organizations and stakeholders
  - Reviewing and finalizing the monitoring tool and monitoring design
  - Organizing a public launch of the initiative
  - Identifying potential monitors
  - Conducting briefing and information sessions with potential monitors
2. Execute actual monitoring or observation activities
  - Coordinate the schedule of monitoring activities with concerned offices
  - Spearhead and supervise the deployment of monitors
  - Channel reports for quick feedback and action from concerned offices
  - Collect monitoring reports
3. Conduct post-monitoring activities
  - Process the monitoring results
  - Convene feedback and problem solving sessions
  - Present monitoring results to the appropriate authorities

#### 4.1.2 The local coordinator

Once the core group is formed, it is important to identify a local coordinator from among the members of the core group. The local coordinator will serve as the overseer for the core group.

The following are the primary tasks of the local coordinator:

- Organize core groups meetings;
- Follow up on the agreed deliverables of the team;
- Coordinate with the volunteers for the monitoring activities; and
- Attend to financial and administrative matters.

#### 4.1.3 Training and capacity building for the core group

The members of the core group must be fully aware of the different responsibilities and tasks they are entrusted with. To help the core group understand all aspects associated with the monitoring project a basic orientation should be provided, including a combination of lectures, presentations and workshops. This helps core group members familiarize themselves with the concepts and terminology used to refer to different aspects and stages of the project. This is especially important for stakeholders who collaborate for the first time.

#### 4.1.4 Knowledge areas

In order to successfully guide the monitoring activity, the Core Group members should be acquainted with three key knowledge areas:

Key Knowledge 1: Good Governance & Social Accountability

Key Knowledge 2: Constructive Engagement

Key Knowledge 3: Performance Monitoring

##### *4.1.4.1 Key knowledge# 1: Good governance and social accountability*

Any group endeavor requires a common understanding or at least complementary appreciation of specific values and objectives. On a higher level, such initiatives require a commitment to a common end. As a very first principle, the core group members need to understand the main underpinnings of the project: the common aspiration for good governance.

Central to capacitating the core group is this question: „What is good governance?“ The core group should have a session that will allow them to discuss the answer to this question. Make them assess their personal views on good governance-- what does it look like and why is it important? This first discussion will allow the group to arrive at varied perspectives from different sectors of governance. Hopefully, common points will emerge which can be used as a foundation for the project.

The core group should also share a discussion on social accountability. This needs to involve arriving at a common definition that enables core group members to distinguish what is from what is not a social accountability strategy. The discussion should also delve into the objectives and expected impacts of any social accountability initiative, including arriving at one shared theory of change, which will provide a common foundation upon which to develop the actual monitoring protocols. Furthermore, because social accountability is a strategy in the pursuit of good governance, a discussion on this topic will naturally give way to a deeper discussion on good governance.

#### 4.1.4.2 Key knowledge #2: Constructive engagement

The second key knowledge area should equip the core group with knowledge on how to engage constructively with state actors. As outlined above, constructive engagement is a situation whereby the government and civil society come to regard each other with trust and thereby provide support and assistance to each other whilst still maintaining an objective stance.

Constructive engagement emphasizes the fact that participatory monitoring should not be understood as means to recriminate state actors for performance shortcomings or to substantiate confrontational dispositions towards the state. Rather, the notion of constructive engagement is based on the acknowledgement that improving public services can be better achieved by developing collaborative relations cutting across the public/private divide and that synergies exist and can be harnessed when civil society and the state cooperate with each other. The end goal of constructive engagement is thus better governance and access to quality services but it also involves a process of building a mature relationship between government and CSOs. Constructive engagement involves trust-building and is evidence-based, results- or solution-oriented and provides for a sustainable kind of engagement linking civil society to the state.

The two basic elements of constructive engagement are:

1. Continuing dialogue
2. Collaborative problem-solving

The rationale of constructive engagement is to:

- Improve governance and particularly to address corruption. This cannot be done by civil society or the government alone; all sectors have to contribute;
- Have relative openness to the government and the existence of mandated mechanisms for citizen participation; and
- Increase expectations regarding what civil society should deliver.

Table 1 outlines the competencies for constructive engagement as defined by G-Watch:

Basic communication	Coordination with civil society groups to conduct a monitoring
	Communication with civil society groups for undertaking the monitoring activities and with regards to the results of the monitoring activities
Negotiation and conflict resolution	Building consensus on means, ends and processes of a joint undertaking
	Resolving differences and conflicts that arise from joint undertakings

Feedback and Action	Negotiating with civil society groups on proposed reforms or measures for improving public service delivery based on monitoring results
	Communicating the results of the monitoring activity to local leaders and decision makers
	Following up on recommendations being acted upon by leaders and decision makers

Source: G-Watch (2012a )

An effective way to instruct core group members on constructive engagement is to organize role-playing activities such as mock negotiations. In such exercises the starting point is to begin with an identified problem, a proposal to address it and expected outcomes and discuss different interest and angles associated in order to arrive at an agreement. The participants can take turns playing the role of either a government representative or CSO/ community member. This facilitates taking on different perspectives, which contributes towards finding common ground and developing sustainable solutions.

#### 4.1.4.3 Key knowledge #3: Performance monitoring

Lastly, the core group should be trained on the key elements of performance monitoring, the particular social accountability approach that the project will utilize to monitor the implementation of certain processes.

As a precondition, the group should understand the following steps and principles:

- Principles of performance monitoring
- Standards mapping
- Developing monitoring tools
- Developing monitoring design
- Conducting an actual monitoring
- Conducting post-monitoring activities (processing of monitoring results; sharing session; problem-solving session; public presentation)

In addition, the core group must be equipped with the competencies of performance monitoring as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Competencies of performance monitoring	
Pre-monitoring	Establishing baseline data

	Setting benchmarks or performance targets
	Developing monitoring tools
Actual monitoring	Using or administering monitoring tools
	Monitoring procurements
	Monitoring contract implementation
Post-monitoring	Checking the outputs based on standards and targets
	Processing of the monitoring results
	Generating issues and problems based on monitoring results
	Measuring results and outcomes
Feedback and action	Formulating proposed solutions to issues and problems based on monitoring results
	Communicating results to stakeholders

#### 4.1.5 Formalizing partnerships and project launch

The formalization of partnerships may take place through a public signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This occasion may also be the public launch of the monitoring project.

The MoA or MoU clarifies who are the different stakeholders involved in leading the project, crystalizing agreements and specifying a division of labor and shared responsibilities. It is one of the most important documents in the monitoring project because it is the basis of the partnerships and main point of reference to defining accountabilities.

The agreement should state the following:

- The purpose of the project, its formal name and its goals and components;
- The project partners, their duties and responsibilities;

- The specific unit/office per participating institution assigned to coordinate and communicate for the project; and
- The start and end date of the project, as well as the duration of the agreement.

## 4.2 The monitoring team

The second group of utmost importance to the monitoring project is that comprised of the individuals who will actually perform the monitoring activities. The activities associated to engaging the monitors and providing the trainings to instruct on the monitoring tools and techniques are at the very core of the concept of citizen empowerment. Therefore, developing adequate strategies to select the members of the monitoring teams and developing appropriate training curricula are key to ensuring program success and maximizing impact.

### 4.2.1 Identify and mobilize monitors

A potential strategy for identifying monitors is to start with those CSOs who are active in the location in question and invite them and their members to become citizen monitors. However, keep in mind that monitors should be community-based and that it is important to involve not only members of CSOs but also average citizens. As a general principle, the citizen monitors should be among those who are users or directly affected by the program or sector targeted.

Also consider whether it is worthwhile to involve local government officials. There are some concrete advantages when the monitoring is conducted jointly by citizens and government representatives since this may streamline the process of transmission of information on the monitoring findings to responsible officials and may enable quick remedial actions to be enacted in order to address identified shortcomings in the delivery of public services. This, however, should be a decision taken carefully and on the basis of a nuanced understanding of the local dynamics between community members and state and government actors since it would be counterproductive if the participation of government officials in any way intimidated or created uneasiness among citizen monitors.

In recruiting volunteers to perform the monitoring activities, implementers should beware of systematically excluding some groups, especially vulnerable groups, at the expense of other – better organized – ones. In other words, it is crucial to make sure not to “empower those already empowered” which is a critique often made of social accountability approaches.

To ensure that vulnerable households are represented, CARE International recommends conducting a social mapping exercise with a separate community group consisting of a mix of older and younger people who know the community well (CARE Malawi, 2013). The social map is used to identify specific groups such as female-headed households, households with orphans, child-headed households, etc., and invite them to information sessions where they can learn about the possibility of participating in the monitoring activity and the potential benefits that they may accrue from it.

Each monitoring site should have a team of volunteer monitors. Experience shows that the ideal size of a monitoring team is between 6-8 community monitors. A smaller team may have difficulty performing the monitoring functions especially when not all members are available. A larger team is more difficult to coordinate and to manage. Once the teams are organized they must identify a team leader who will be responsible for coordinating the team's activities and act as a liaison between the monitoring team and the core group.

Another recommendation is to have one core group member assigned to each monitoring team. He/she can serve as adviser, co-monitor and mentor of the group, which is especially useful if it is the group's first experience undertaking a monitoring activity.

In San Miguel monitoring teams were composed of both community members and LGU officials. More concretely they included farmers, local government officials, community leaders, cooperative members and women federation members. However, it should be noted that this cooperative approach was largely facilitated by the characteristics of the relationship between community members and LGU officials. (embeddedness, trust, responsiveness), as identified through the Social Accountability Assessment methodology.

Source: G-Watch 2012b and Basel Institute on Governance 2016

#### 4.2.2 Capacity building of citizen monitors

Monitors should be trained in two phases:

- A briefing orientation in a classroom-type setting.
- On-the-job learning experience and coaching on how to use the tool.

#### 4.2.3 The briefing orientation

A briefing orientation is the most basic way to train the monitors. It is primarily meant to impart basic and initial monitoring skills and monitoring tips.

The training seeks to convey an understanding of the concepts associated with social accountability and how citizen monitoring relates to it. This includes understanding the concepts of good governance, social accountability, constructive engagement and the methodology of performance monitoring. It should also include a good understanding of the manner in which the targeted public service or social program is supposed to be delivered as mandated by law and relevant regulations.

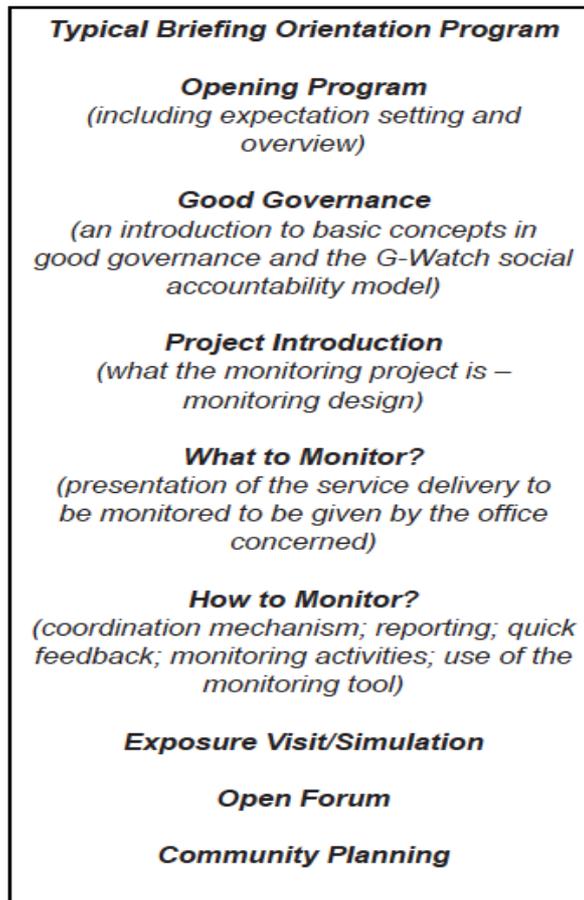
In addition, the training should inform monitors about the rights and entitlements they – as well as their fellow community members – are entitled to when accessing the public service

or the benefits from the social program in question. It is through a thorough understanding of this information that citizen monitors can be empowered to correctly identify discrepancies between the legal framework and the actual provision of public goods and service. It is also through this comprehensive understanding of citizen's rights and entitlements and of the formally stipulated protocols for program implementation that citizen monitors may be empowered to correctly identify abuse of public authority and corrupt acts. Like with the core group, these are important concepts and ideas that the monitors must learn in order to fully comprehend the significance of the monitoring initiative.

The briefing orientation can be conducted using a combination of teaching techniques such as lectures, workshops, reporting and simulation activities. Briefing orientations are designed not to intimidate the monitors who are, more often than not, new to the technicalities and big ideas of good governance, social accountability and performance monitoring. Activities that will be conducted should deepen their understanding and initial skills at monitoring.

Furthermore, the briefing orientation should serve as venue for teambuilding. The monitoring teams should get acquainted and establish rapport. At the end of the briefing orientation, a guided planning workshop should be conducted. Here, monitoring teams will be expected to produce a monitoring plan for their area.

The following is a generic program outline for a monitor training session:



Source: G-Watch 2012a: 134

#### 4.2.3.1 Project introduction

Monitors need to understand the rationale for and the purpose of the monitoring initiative. Hence, it is important that they grasp not only the concepts but also the relevance of the following ideas:

- Good governance
- Corruption and its impacts on community welfare
- Social accountability
- Citizen rights and entitlements as relevant and applicable in relation to the targeted sector/ program
- Constructive engagement
- Performance monitoring
- The importance of the targeted sector or program for their community

A resource person may be invited to speak about these topics. This part of the briefing orientation program can be best taught using a combination of two methods:

1. A lecture with visual aid/presentation; and
2. A workshop where monitors are given the opportunity to define what corruption and good governance mean to them.

In order to deepen participants' understanding, the organizers can use meta-card workshops where they are asked to give their initial thoughts/ideas/impressions on the above concepts. The trainings should provide plenty of opportunities to discuss practical examples of what constitutes deviation from established program operation and examples of what kinds of actions on the part of service providers are corrupt. The speaker can then build on how the monitors understand the concepts. This will be more engaging and also help both speakers and monitors understand each other.

#### *4.2.3.2 What will be monitored?*

To grasp the service delivery being monitored, the organizers should familiarize the monitors with the targeted program and the rationale for its selection. Inviting a responsible authority from the sector in question may be an effective way to deliver the basic information about the public services or social programs targeted.

Monitors should become familiarized with the program's goals and objectives, its strategies, components, targets, and standards. The speaker can also take this opportunity to encourage the monitors to be active and allay fears and apprehensions in monitoring government program which are common among monitors.

#### *4.2.3.3 How to monitor?*

Introducing the actual monitoring activity is probably the longest part of the program but also the most important one. It includes delivering detailed information on how the monitors will use the monitoring tool, how to understand and use their coordination system, and how they can report findings for immediate response and feedback from service providers.

The method to be used for this portion of the program is a combination of lecture and workshops. A discussion can be supported by interactive methods such as a role-playing exercise or a simulation of the monitoring experience. The local core group can be tapped and given roles accordingly. The monitors will then go around and test the use of the monitoring tool. Note that it is important to hold a processing session afterwards so that lessons and insights can be fleshed out and the monitors can be further oriented on the proper use of the tools.

#### *4.2.3.4 Open discussion*

An open discussion gives monitors a chance to ask the core group clarifying questions about the monitoring initiative. It also serves to provide them with useful advice during the monitoring activity. Participants should be able to provide feedback if they are having

difficulty understanding the tool. This part should be properly documented by the organizers for future reference.

#### 4.2.3.5 Community planning

The community planning workshop is done as the final activity of the briefing orientation. To accomplish this, identify necessary activities and make contingency plans or strategies for challenges you may foresee. Below are guiding questions you can follow:

- What specific activities must the group undertake to perform tasks or deliver expected outputs?
- What difficulties/challenges might the group encounter?
- What strategies will the group employ to address difficulties/challenges?

The output of the planning workshop is an action plan that details tasks and the delivery schedule of outputs including resources needed

The following action plan template illustrates how the agreements reached during the community planning stage may be consolidated.

Action plan template					
Activity	Time frame	Persons in charge	Resources needed	Possible challenges	Strategies to address challenges

#### 4.2.3.6 Pledge of commitment

Before formally closing the briefing orientation, you can take this opportunity to formalize the commitment of the monitors by asking them to make a pledge of commitment. Issue certificates of participation and official monitoring IDs and invite them to a creative closing ritual to celebrate their commitment.

#### 4.2.4 Applied learning experience and coaching

It should be recognized that the briefing orientation provides only the basis for developing the skills to conduct monitoring activities. Other activities that can be undertaken to support and further develop the monitoring skills of citizen volunteers include:

- **Mentoring:** A member of the core group may lead the monitoring team through a first time application of the monitoring tool (depending on the nature of the program and the tool this can either be an actual monitoring exercise or a mock exercise). The core group member may take this opportunity to provide more detailed explanations

about particular aspects of the public service delivery or social program in question that need to be taken into account during the monitoring activities.

- Role playing/simulation exercises: With the help of a core group member or a trained facilitator, citizen monitors can participate in role playing activities where they may replicate possible scenarios arising during actual monitoring activities. This is useful to help them prepare in dealing with likely situations arising in the course of the monitoring.
- Field trips to other monitoring sites: The monitors can learn a lot from visiting other monitoring sites and meeting other fellow citizen monitors who may be able to answer questions and share their experiences.

Despite all training and capacity building efforts, nothing can replace actual experience or practice to fully capacitate the monitors. It is therefore important to stress this portion because it is only through actual monitoring (with the guidance of the core group) that monitors can really learn how to perform their tasks and acquire the necessary monitoring skills in the field.

## 5 Conducting the monitoring activity

During the conduct of the monitoring activity, team leaders are tasked with keeping the monitoring tool safe. To avoid inconsistencies, G-Watch recommends only using one tool for each monitoring site. Whilst monitors may have individual copies of the tool during the actual monitoring, their data and observations should be consolidated into one monitoring tool at the end of the day.

The monitoring activity has three components:

1. Coordination process of planning each monitoring visit and the sessions for data reporting.
2. Actual observation: when the monitoring tool is used to gather data.
3. Feedback: to respond to observed problems encountered during the observation.

The coordination and communication mechanism serves to show the linkages of the actors involved in the monitoring initiative. By carefully coordinating the monitoring and feedback sessions it is possible to organize and manage information flows and plan further actions accordingly among the parties involved. This approach is based on the assumption that the actors/units are interdependent. It is, therefore, important to maximize available resources and information obtained from this partnership.

The objective of the coordination and communication mechanism is to

- Coordinate actions;
- Share and disseminate information that is at the heart of the monitoring project; and
- Respond accordingly to developments and results of the monitoring project.

The monitoring initiative is designed to ensure compliance with standards and not merely to capture non-performance for its own sake. Hence, whenever a monitor observes potential non-compliance, he/she is tasked to report this for appropriate action to the team leaders. The reporting system is also designed to help monitors handle results/data and deal with variances of findings that indicate non-compliance with standards.

The specific details involved in conducting the actual monitoring activity vary according to the specific monitoring approach selected. Three of the most widely used monitoring approaches (Citizen Report Cards, Community Score Cards and Social Audits) are discussed in greater detail in Section 7.

## 6 Post-monitoring activities

### 6.1 Processing the monitoring results

Data obtained from monitoring activities should be consolidated after every actual observation activity. Through the team leaders, the core group coordinates with the monitoring teams and takes the lead in consolidating the monitoring results and findings following every monitoring visit. This is important, as monitoring data tend to be overwhelming when they are not consolidated after every stage. The objective is to encode all monitoring data from all the sites and to aggregate them into one master file.

### 6.2 Aggregating, analyzing, and articulating the findings

This step involves collecting the monitoring data, checking for data gaps, generating information and identifying trends and issues. Who is performing this task is crucial. Ideally, citizens themselves should be trained to aggregate and interpret the findings of their monitoring exercise. If this is not possible, it is key to make sure that community members trust the actor or organization taking over this function. A sharing session with the monitors may be critical in order to validate the findings after the data has been aggregated and summarized.

The core group may be tasked with taking the lead in interpreting the data produced through the monitoring exercise. Generally speaking, the purpose of the data analysis is to summarize the types of deviant actions or behaviors encountered, associate each to a specific office or section in the organizational structure of the agency providing the public

services or managing the social benefit, and identify who is the authority responsible for the performance within each of the areas where the irregularities were recorded. In other words, through the data analysis process it shall be determined who can be held responsible for the anomalies encountered and what possible recommendations can be made in order to address them in order to improve the monitored service delivery.

### 6.3 Sharing session

Sharing sessions are conducted to allow the monitors and the core group to process their overall monitoring experience. It involves the sharing of experience and the accounting of actions and decisions among the monitors. The sharing session is important to validate monitoring results and information from the actual monitoring by the monitors themselves. In addition, emerging issues and corresponding recommendations that need to be presented during the problem-solving session are identified and generated.

The program involves sharing experiences in terms of working together, data gathering, and actual monitoring experience. Also, part of the sharing session is presenting the results of the processing including the interpretation on the results.

Sharing sessions are meant to accomplish the following:

- Encourage maximum participation from monitors, hence methods such as meta-cards and small group exercises can be utilized;
- Provide a conducive environment for meaningful learning and reflection; and
- Recognize the efforts of the monitors and celebrate their experience.

Suggested agenda for a sharing session:

Opening

Accomplishment record

Validation workshop

Identification of issues

Generation of recommendations

Recommitment to sustain the monitoring activity

Closing

## 6.4 Problem solving session

The problem solving session is a meeting between the core group, monitors, decision makers and other key stakeholders of the monitored program where information on the monitoring findings are communicated to the competent authorities, with the aim of discussing them, soliciting responses and generating commitments from them. The precise list of participating stakeholders should include both government and CSOs and should specifically include decision makers from participating institutions and from the programs/sectors in which the monitoring activity has taken place.

The following are guiding questions to assist in the decision as to who should be invited to the problem solving session:

- What levels of government need to be represented?
- Who are the people who can take decisions about the issues raised so far?
- Who has a mandate to take the issues forward, including budgeting for certain activities?
- Which community leaders and institutions (committees, CBOs, etc.) need to be invited?
- Have any issues been raised that are relevant for other stakeholders, including international NGOs and churches?
- Who can explain why certain services are being done badly and others not?

The problem solving session is intended to present findings and discuss experiences from the monitoring initiative in a constructive manner. It should be driven by evidence and facts as issues concerning the service delivery are discussed and recommendations made to decision makers. Keeping with the principles of constructive engagement is key to obtaining the support and commitment of decision makers in responding to identified issues and adopting recommendations.

To prepare for the problem solving session the following presentations should be prepared:

- Highlights and accomplishment of the monitoring project
- Issues and recommendations
- Initial assessment and feedback on the monitoring initiative and sustainability

It should be noted that the problem solving session is not yet a public event because it will likely involve sensitive negotiations, arguments and feedback. Similarly, for the previous reasons, it is of utmost importance that prior to convening a problem solving session all data from the sharing session have already been clarified to reflect emerging issues and that some initial recommendations on ways to address the identified performance shortcomings be already discussed among the monitoring groups and the core group.

Suggested agenda for a problem solving session:

- Opening Remarks
- Acknowledgement of Guests
- Presentation of the Monitoring Profile
- Highlights and Accomplishment of the Monitoring Project
- Issues and Recommendations for the Service Delivery
- Open Forum
- Initial Assessment and Feedback on the Monitoring Initiative and Sustainability
- Recap and Commitment Setting
- Closing

The problem solving session might become confrontational if not handled carefully and impartially. Therefore, it is important that a skilled facilitator with negotiation skills and a strong personality be present to mediate in this meeting. Make sure that service users as well as service providers are well prepared for this meeting and understand its purpose – this helps avoiding personal confrontations.

Suggestions taken from the experiences of implementers to take into account when conducting a problem solving session:

1. DO remember to include the findings from your sharing session. It helps when the decision makers see the point of view of the monitors themselves.
2. DO begin the session with the primary objective of cooperating with the decision makers. Remember that you are not there to merely point out their problems, but to give them solutions. If you are presenting adverse findings, it makes them feel as if they are not doing their jobs, which puts them on the defensive. Keep them from putting on their defence mechanisms by leading them into finding solutions, not pointing fingers.
3. DO open your mind to what they say. Many times, what they say are not merely excuses, but factual limitations. It helps if you listen to what they say instead of dismissing them as excuses.
4. DON'T blame them. Many times, members of CSOs get full of angst when they communicate with the decision makers, and forget that they are there to solve the problems together. Blaming and finger-pointing do not solve the problem. Resist the temptation to be bitter and just state the facts.

All agreements arrived at jointly by participating community members and service providers should be recorded and specific actions and associated responsibilities should be spelled out. The following is an example of a planning matrix that captures the necessary information associated to the agreements reached:

EXAMPLE – PLANNING MATRIX						
Priority theme (list each issue)	Action (activities needed to address the issue)	Who will lead it (name & institution)	With whom (name & institution)	Completion date (be realistic)	Resources (what is needed to do the action)	Notes
Cleanliness of health center	- more staff - community to use bins	- District official - Health center committee	- Health center clinician - Health center grounds cleaner	1 <sup>st</sup> August 2007 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2007		
Punctuality of staff	- staff to observe official hours	Health center clinician	Health center committee	2nd March 2007	none	
Attitude of staff towards clients	- staff to understand concerns of clients	Nursing sister	Health center committee			

Source: CARE Malawi 2013

### 6.5 Public presentation

Following the sharing and problem solving sessions, the results should be shared with the general public. In addition to the stakeholders and decision makers who attended the previous sessions, this may include the media, other CSOs, concerned individuals and politicians. It is important that the public presentation meeting is open to all community members and is adequately advertised for maximum visibility.

The public presentation is meant to create public awareness of the monitoring conducted, to give the monitoring program wider visibility and to build a constituency who can follow up on the commitments made by the authorities and service providers. It also has the purpose to generally increase citizens' awareness on how they may exercise their own agency in order to hold public officials and government authorities to account.

### 6.6 Sustainability and follow up

The monitoring process does not stop immediately after generating a first database of citizen assessments and a first round of meetings with the pertinent authorities and service providers to discuss findings and generate agreements. Follow-up steps are required to jointly ensure implementation of plans and collectively monitor the outcomes.

In order to institutionalize the practice, repeated cycles of the monitoring are needed. The regular application of the monitoring tool provides the necessary information to assess if any improvements have been achieved and consolidates the skills and confidence of the

monitors themselves. The repeat cycle also represents an integral part of the exercise in social accountability, as it is one of the means through which to verify whether agreed upon commitments have been implemented.

Additionally, making sure that there is regular feedback provided to the citizen monitors as well as to the community is a critical element for establishing the sustainability of any monitoring scheme. Participants need to be informed about the exact manner in which their inputs have been acted upon by the pertinent authorities since it is this manner that perceptions may begin to change about the value of democratic and grassroots actions to exercise bottom up accountability, in other words, to move in the direction of citizen empowerment.

## 7 The monitoring tools

The monitoring tool should contain those standards for the provision of the public service or the social program that ensure effective and efficient delivery and control against corrupt practices. The details covered in the monitoring tool will vary depending on the level of decentralization of the program or service in question. Also, because standards may vary from one location to the next, it is a good practice to consult with the relevant authorities to validate the tool in each monitoring site during the preparatory phase. Ease of use should be of utmost priority in the development of the monitoring tool.

In the following, examples and guidelines of how to develop the monitoring tools are presented for three modalities of citizen monitoring projects: citizen report cards, community score cards and social audits.

### 7.1 Citizen report cards

Citizen report cards (CRCs) are documents that are produced by citizen groups or city administrations to present the results of a survey on issues that are important to the community. In conducting survey research, self-administered questionnaires or interviews can be used in order to obtain data on peoples' feelings regarding a certain issue. Report cards provide a wealth of information and therefore may be used as advocacy documents, as the basis of a public information campaign, for policy making as well as to plan activities in the community. They are most commonly used to gain specific information about a community issue, improve public services, plan city budgets, etc.

#### 7.1.1 Purpose

CRCs are used in situations where demand side data, such as user perceptions of the quality and satisfaction with public services, is missing. By systematically gathering and disseminating public feedback and comparing performance of service delivery across

regions or sectors, CRCs serve as a „surrogate for competition” for state-owned monopolies that otherwise lack the incentive to be as responsive as private enterprises to their client’s needs. They are a useful medium through which citizens can credibly and collectively ‘signal’ to agencies about their performance and advocate for change.

### 7.1.2 The tools

Survey questionnaires contain written questions that people respond to directly on the form itself without aid and are usually handed directly to respondents or are mailed to them. Questionnaires must be relevant instruments to capture key dimensions of quality of services and therefore, prior to questionnaire development, researchers must make sure the questions actually measure the concepts about which they aim to uncover information. Before a question is included, one should consider how it will be analyzed and how the data in general will be presented/published. If this cannot be decided, the question should be adjusted or left out. It is important not to waste the respondents’ time with needless questions as they might become frustrated and throw the questionnaire away or skip parts of it.

There are additional guidelines that may be taken into account when constructing a questionnaire. These include:

- Having clarity about the information that is being sought: As a first step it is useful to formulate the precise problem(s) to be addressed in the survey and let the questions spring from these issues.
- Deciding on what kind of questions will be used, whether closed or open-ended. Closed-ended questions provide respondents with a fixed set of answers from which they can choose. Open-ended questions allow respondents to write their own answers. It is possible to gain benefits by using both types of questions but there are tradeoffs as the richer information obtained through open-ended questions is considerably more time consuming and challenging to analyze.
- In constructing response categories, you may want to use scales for some close-ended questions. Scales allow people to respond in more detail and to more accurately measure their responses. Scales are most useful when you want more than a simple yes/no response, e.g. for questions where the response to a statement is requested and an attitude scale is provided, a more detailed response can be acquired.

For example:

The city water supply is ecologically clean.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

- The wording of questions also requires a great deal of attention. Specifically, questions should be in present tense, simple, direct, and should express only one idea per question. When constructing questions, one should not overestimate the reading ability of respondents. Therefore, using slang or technical terms and referencing concepts that are not clearly defined or which depend on the respondent’s interpretation should be avoided.
- It is helpful to draft an outline or list of topics for the questionnaire. Then, one must figure out the best sequence of topics (not necessarily logical but a psychological sequence). Questions asked early in the questionnaire should not bias answers to later questions. Questions dealing with intriguing issues should be asked first to get people interested and hold their attention. Also, never begin with age/sex/income etc. as people are so used to these questions that they might switch off or throw away the questionnaire. It is best to save these for the end. In the case of particularly important topics, additional questions (i.e. two similar questions separated or with a change in wording) can be used to check reliability of results.
- Having a process for external re-examination and revision of questions. A critical response may be sought from a methods expert and from someone familiar with the particular sector targeted. Furthermore, the questionnaire can also be tested on different minorities (e.g. ethnic, women, different age groups) to see if any biases exist in the wording. Existing or old questionnaires on the same topic can also be consulted for ideas and guidance.
- Pre-testing or piloting the survey helps to catch and solve unforeseen problems with the questionnaire. The piloting is usually conducted through personal interviews and includes a small number of people who are representative of the group (in terms of education/gender/opinions) to whom the questionnaire will be given. When conducting the pre-test, views, criticisms and suggestions should be recorded and incorporated into the subsequent draft.
- Clearly specifying procedures for questionnaire use. Respondents need to understand what is required of them when they complete the questionnaire. Therefore, one should check if content, form, sequencing, spacing arrangement and instructions are clear. Also, one should make sure there is ample space for replies

and give clear, simple instructions. For example, state clearly if you want an “x” in a box, whether one or as many answers as desired can be chosen, etc.

- Carefully record all information pertaining to the response rate to the survey. This refers to the proportion of a sample of people who complete and return a questionnaire, or who agree to be interviewed. Be aware that those who do not respond may differ in some way from the rest of the sample, which in turn, may affect the data.
- Developing a cover letter. This is the letter that accompanies a questionnaire and serves to introduce and explain it to the recipient. The cover letter should be on the organization’s letterhead and include information about the sponsor, the address and contact number of the research organization and the deadline. The cover letter should also explain the confidentiality of responses, how respondents were selected, why the research is being conducted and the potential benefits anticipated from the study.
- Keeping the number of questions within a reasonable range. As the length of the questionnaire increases, the response rate decreases. A good questionnaire should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. Be honest about the estimated completion time in the cover letter.

## 7.2 Community score cards

The Community Score Card (CSC) process is a community-based monitoring tool that, similarly to the citizen report card, generates information on quality of public services. However, the CSC method differs from the CRC in that it is community-based and in that it involves direct interactions between citizens/users and service providers and relevant government officials. In this way, by linking service providers and local government authorities to the community, the CSC mechanism encourages the development of direct feedback mechanisms between providers and users citizens, builds local capacity, and strengthens citizen voice and community empowerment. Since it is a grassroots process that involves significant involvement and collective action capabilities it is more likely to be of use in small communities or rural settings.

### 7.2.1 Purpose

The CSC process uses the „community” as its unit of analysis and is focused on monitoring at the local/facility levels. It is a flexible approach that may be applied in community monitoring and performance evaluation of services, projects and even government administrative units (such as district assemblies).

The CSC approach generally solicits inputs on measurable indicators of quality, efficiency and transparency in the delivery of public services. This may include aspects such as:

- Tracking inputs or expenditures (e.g. availability of drugs, maintenance of school buildings).
- Monitoring the quality of services/projects (e.g. waiting times, teachers' qualifications).
- Generating benchmark performance criteria that can be used in resource allocation and budget decisions.

In producing an assessment of the quality of services provided and troubleshooting the areas where shortcomings may be prevalent the CSC takes a two-pronged approach.

On the one hand, citizen monitors are trained to engage in activities that enable them to rate services on a series of relevant dimensions. There are different options how to conduct the citizen-based CSC evaluation: In a first version, citizen-monitoring groups are formed and each group is in charge of filling out one scoring matrix. To do so, they are able to go to the point of service provision (health facility, school, etc.) to conduct observations or may consult with other community members to collect experiences and opinions to inform their scoring process. In a second version, it is also possible for participants to perform the scoring on the basis of their own experiences with the service in question in the context of organized focus group discussions.

On the other hand, service providers themselves are encouraged to undertake a self-assessment exercise where they identify the areas where their activities may not be performed up to standard and the reasons for those shortcomings. A service provider scorecard can be conducted after the community scorecard has been completed or it can be conducted concurrently. The process for the providers is essentially the same as for the users. The benefits and purpose of the scorecard should be thoroughly explained to all staff to make sure everyone understands what the goals of the exercise are and so that they do not feel threatened.

The following are examples of questions that may be used to elicit the inputs from service providers:

- What are the types of services we offer?
- How do we offer them?
- What are the main challenges?
- What is the role of the community in service delivery, and do they take part? why?
- What can be done to improve the situation?

The exercise allows identifying what are considered to be the main issues from the providers' perspectives. Participants themselves should then rate their own performance and point to the external elements that impact their ability to provide services as mandated by the laws and regulations governing their area of work.

After both the demand and supply side assessments have been conducted, then citizens and service providers are asked to engage in a dialogue over their mutual findings and to seek remedial actions and commitments to address the problems with service provision.

The following is a graphic illustration of the CSC process for the health sector as provided by CARE:



Source: CARE Malawi 2013:11.

### 7.2.2 Implementing the citizen score card

The CSC monitoring tool will typically include the following aspects:

- Community profile: Introduces the monitoring site. Necessary in order to aid the processing of monitoring results and to accurately identify which tool belongs with which area.
- Checklist of monitoring points for program inputs:
  - Inputs are the resources allocated to a service delivery point in order to ensure the efficient delivery of that particular service. They are therefore actions taking place prior to the actual delivery of program benefits or of the public service such as planning activities, resource allocations, and execution of budgets.
  - For example: inputs of a health center may include the number of staff who should be employed at the center, numbers of equipment, types of services offered, number of houses for staff, etc.

The following is an example of an input tracking matrix for a CSC exercise in the health sector:

INPUT TRACKING MATRIX			
Indicators	Input Entitlement (as specified by service mandate)	Actual (community perception, what is really happening in community, or at health center)	Remarks/evidence
Numbers of service provider staff present	4 providers with certification or qualification for this level of care	2 qualified providers available	
Number of beneficiaries employed	100 per village/GVH	50 are employed on the project	

Source: CARE Malawi, 2013:12

- Checklist of monitoring points associated with implementation (actual service delivery or distribution of program benefits):
  - Developing these indicators is most effective when it incorporates users' inputs as this allows taking into consideration elements that are easily observable by users as well as others to which they may attach particular importance or which might make a significant difference for user satisfaction.
  - In order to incorporate users' views, focus group discussions may be organized with community members belonging to social groups foreseen as the main program beneficiaries.
- Provide information on input entitlements of a particular service before discussion and reaching agreements on input indicators. Core group members will usually take

on the analysis and aggregation of the issues raised by the different focus groups into a monitoring tool for the community, which responds to the needs and expectations of the groups represented in the focus groups.

The observed results associated to each of the performance indicators may be

EXAMPLE – SCORING MATRIX

Group name: ..... Date: ..... Village: ..... Catchment area: .....						
Indicator	Score					Reasons
	Very bad = 1	Bad = 2	Just okay = 3	Good = 4	Very good = 5	
Indicator 1 .....						
Indicator 2 .....						
Indicator 3 .....						

aggregated in a scoring matrix such as the one presented in the following example:

Source: CARE Malawi, 2013:12

### 7.3 Social audits

A social audit is the process through which all details of a public project are scrutinized at a public meeting. A public project may be defined as any project that utilizes public funds. This includes money spent by government on health, roads, education and so on through its ministries, and also includes decentralized funds. While social audits have sometimes been used to investigate quality of services such as the police, customs or schools, the majority of social audits have focused on public works.

A social audit is a qualitatively different approach as it examines all aspects of a public project, including the management of finances, officers responsible, recordkeeping, access to information, accountability, levels of public involvement, and so forth. It seeks to evaluate how well public resources are being used and how to improve performance. Although the term “audit” is used, social auditing does not merely consist in examining costs and finance – the central concern of a social audit is how resources are used for social objectives.

The information emanating from the social audit is analyzed and shared publicly in a participatory fashion. Social audits are expected to be strongly empowering because they involve the development of an in-depth understanding of public processes and the know-how about identifying and accessing the relevant information from the analysis from public sources. Thus, if members of the public can master the skills to effectively track public expenditure associated with a particular program or budget line, the expectation is that they can then employ the same skills to track government expenditure in other areas.

### 7.3.1 Purpose

First and foremost, a social audit aims to ensure that implementation of public programs is transparent by increasing public participation at all stages of the project cycle. Social audits are also useful to identify, control and report irregularities in the execution of public projects and programs and in that manner preventing abuse of funds and corruption.

In addition to those stated goals, social audits also aim at strengthening the following outcomes:

- Produce information that is perceived to be evidence-based, accurate and impartial,
- Create awareness among beneficiaries and providers of local services,
- Improve citizens' access to information concerning government documents,
- Enhance the ability of citizens to influence the behavior of the government.

In order to ensure the targeted project is being implemented properly, the social audit seeks to answer questions such as:

- Did money allocated to specific projects actually get to those projects?
- What are the specifications of the project? Have they been met?
- Is the quality and quantity of materials used as per the specifications?
- Did all workers receive their payments as indicated?
- Was the project completed within the specified time?
- Who are the managers of the project?
- Was the cash allocated for the project used for the purposes for which it was intended?
- Has the community been sufficiently involved in the project?
- Have project managers kept good records?
- Have project managers given the public the necessary information to help the public monitor the project?
- Has there been any abuse of funds in the project?

### 7.3.2 Implementing a social audit

Depending on the design, the process of how social audits are conducted varies considerably. Differences largely depend on the context, as the availability of information as well as the legal and political framework will shape the strategy for the initiative.

In general, a social audit involves extensive review of official documents since projects are documented using a large number of records. These should be available from the various official agencies responsible for the projects or areas in question. The first stage of the social audit process -or gathering stage- is devoted to obtaining records for the projects to be assessed. This is a crucial stage in the process but is often difficult and frustrating since the agencies under investigation may not have kept records properly or may be unwilling to provide such records. It is important to include the officials from the agencies that are being

evaluated since officials will be more willing to provide information if they are included and gain and understanding of the potential benefits of the process.

The information obtained through the relevant documents may be then complemented and verified through means of other research methods and data sources such as interviews, surveys, quality tests, compilation of statistics, case studies, participant observation, and evaluation panels. In cases where quality tests have been conducted (e.g. testing the quality of the cement used in a construction or the bitumen premix for a road), they have often produced hard evidence of resource misuse.

The process of collecting data is extensive and takes up a lot of time. Audit committees may be divided according to a distribution of tasks in which some members take up conducting interviews (with figures such as the municipal mayor and the head of procurement and contracts unit), whereas other members may take up visiting the sites (roads, buildings etc.) and collecting information on the project outputs.

The following illustration provides an example from a social audit of community development funds in Kenya:

**Table 5: List of essential documents for CDF Projects, and relevant social audit questions**

Record	Social Audit Questions
Project Proposal	Is there a project proposal? Who initiated the project? Was the community involved at inception of the project? Who is implementing the project? Who are project committee members?
Second Schedule	Is project well named or is name ambiguous? How much has project received in the particular year/s of funding? Is the project name, code and amount consistent on all documents such as BQ, work plan, status reports, etc?
Third Schedule	Which is the relevant government department? What are the details of sub-projects? How much has the project received over successive years if it is continuing?
Fourth Schedule (effective end of financial year 2007/8)	How much remained unspent on each project? Do expenditure records support the expenditure claims?
Fifth Schedule (effective end of financial year 2007/8)	How has unspent money been reallocated? Was necessary approval obtained?
Approved Work Plan	Does the project have a work plan? Does work plan give sufficient information? Has the work plan been followed?
Approved Bill of Quantities	Which government department was involved in preparation of BQ? What are the specifications of the project? Is the BQ accurate? Do the amounts quoted in the BQ reflect market rates? Are BQ specifications consistent with such a construction? Does BQ clearly have the name of the contractor?
Minutes	Do minutes give the necessary information? Which officers were present during the different meetings? Do the meetings fulfil the quorum rule of half of all CDFC members?
Contract Agreement	Does contract agreement correspond with the work plan and BQ? What are contractor's obligations in the project?
Tender information	Was tender process open and fair? Is there a technical and financial analysis record of the BQ? Who prepared it? Was the most competitive bidder given the work?
Certificate of Completion	Was there a verification of the project? By which government officers? Are the names of the relevant officers clearly written on the written approval? How much allowance is paid to the government officers and where is it recorded?
Bursary list	Does the CDFC maintain a list of each bursary recipient per financial year? What is the basis of awarding bursaries?
Payment vouchers, invoices, receipts, LPO's delivery notes	Are expenditure records well maintained? Do there records reflect actual payments made? Are all records made for duly received deliveries? Do expenditure records correspond to other financial records such as the cashbook (if applicable) and the vote book held by the DDO?
CDF monthly expenditure reports (from November 2007 prepared by the Fund Manager)	Does the CDFC prepare monthly expenditure records as required? Who approves these records? Do they correspond with the financial records and actual work done?

Source: Open Society for East Africa 2008

### *7.3.2.1 Tips on collecting information*

The biggest challenge in social auditing of the community development fund (CDF) is that officials are reluctant to give information.

Here are some tips to improve your chances of obtaining information:

1. Decide your approach beforehand: Is the social auditing going to be done by a group? Is it going to be done by a few individuals on behalf of the community? This should be decided beforehand so that the social auditor does not misrepresent him/herself as this can taint the credibility of the audit.
2. Do your groundwork: A social auditor must realize that complaints about funds may be based on ignorance, malice or misinformation. A social audit must endeavor to uncover the facts. No accusations should be made without verification, and allegations should be cross-checked with documented information.
3. Obtain community support: A social auditor seeks to protect the interests of the community. As such, the social audit must build widespread acceptability and support among the community by raising awareness regarding the importance of social auditing. This is very important, where the social audit seeks to obtain information on behalf of the community through a written request. Public officers pay more attention to the requests of a representative group than to an individual.
4. Do not be aggressive or confrontational. Be firm, clear and respectful in your approach. If the official/s seem to be uncooperative, it helps to request information formally through a written letter from the community requesting a clarification.
5. Get photocopies: As far as possible, the social auditors should obtain photocopies of the records needed and should offer to cover the costs of photocopying. If the officer is unwilling to provide copies of documents, the auditors may make handwritten notes of the records. This is likely to be a very tedious process but participants are encouraged to invest the time required to collect information through handwritten notes if necessary.

### *7.3.2.2 Data analysis/collation*

Deciphering official records can be challenging and complex. The information gathered through different methods and from different sources should be summarized in one comprehensive document that is easy to understand for everyone who is involved in the process. For the data to be user-friendly, it will have to be converted.

The most effective method of verifying the information is through physical verification of projects and interviews with project stakeholders, including the officials, contractors/suppliers and even project beneficiaries who comprise members of the public within the vicinity of a project.

### *7.3.2.3 Distributing and getting feedback on the information*

Public works social audits have often produced the following findings:

- Works that are paid but have not taken place, i.e. roads or wells exist only on paper;
- Work is done only in part (only a fraction of the amount stated in the records is delivered or only a part of the tasks agreed on are completed);
- Work is done in worse quality than original quality specified in the contract;
- Work that is done is billed twice and payments are made twice;
- Muster rolls include „ghost workers” (people who are dead, have long left the village, have never worked on the project etc. appear on pay rolls);
- The wages actually paid are considerably below what is stated in the records

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